

UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF INTRODUCTION CARRIED BY JOHN JAMES AUDUBON ON HIS MISSOURI RIVER EXPEDITION.

BY RUTHVEN DEANE.

AUDUBON, like many other people, when travelling in foreign countries or going into new territory, supplied himself with letters of introduction, which always rendered him great assistance in his special objects, and made for him many life-long friends.

It was about a year before he started on the memorable Missouri River Expedition, that he began to correspond and talk up the trip with those whom he had selected to make up his party. At that time he secured letters of introduction and recommendation, but not knowing to whom they would be presented they were necessarily of the "to whom it may concern" type. The following five are of special interest, as they only show further evidence of the very high esteem in which Audubon was held by friends who were prominent in official positions. Copies of these letters were found in the Audubon account books, and I express many thanks to Mr. John E. Thayer, in whose possession they are, for the liberty of publishing them.

I.

United States of America,
Department of State.

To all to whom these presents shall come — greeting.

Know Ye, that the bearer hereof, John James Audubon, a distinguished naturalist and native citizen of the United States, has made known to me his intention of travelling on the continent with the view principally of aiding the cause of science by extending his researches and explorations in natural history, and as he is known to me to be a man of character and honor and worthy of all friendly offices and of all personal regard, these are therefore to request all whom it may concern, to permit him to pass freely, without let or molestation, and to extend to him all such aid and protection as he may need, and which becomes the hospitality of civilized and friendly nations.

In testimony whereof I, Daniel Webster,¹ Secretary of State of the United States, have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of this department to be affixed at the City of Washington, this the 24th day of July, A. D. 1842.

II.

Washington, 24 July, 1842.

The bearer of this note is Mr. Audubon well known in the world as a very distinguished naturalist who has contributed largely to the amusement and instruction of those who take pleasure in his interesting pursuits, by his publications.

I understand that Mr. Audubon proposes visiting the western part of this great continent and possibly those regions where the British fur trade companies pursue their adventures.

Although the known kindness and hospitality of the managers of these companies render any recommendation or introduction of a gentleman so distinguished wholly useless, I beg to add my testimony of his great merit and of his deserving in every respect all assistance and support that may be given him, as well as for his own sake and for the sake of that science which he is so well qualified to improve and promote. I believe I may add that Mr. Audubon has no other motive whatever for his excursion but the pursuit to which I have alluded.

ASHBURTON.²

III.

Head Quarters of the Army,
Washington, July 25th, 1842.

To the Officers of the
United States Army,
Gentlemen,

This letter may be exhibited to some of you on the remote frontiers. Its object is to bespeak your kind aid and assistance in

¹ Secretary of State, 1841-43 and 1850-52. Born Jan. 18, 1782, died Oct. 24, 1852. A warm personal friend of Audubon, who aided him in many ways and was a subscriber to the folio edition of his 'Birds of America.'

² Lord Alexander Baring Ashburton, born 1774, died May, 1848. An English financier and diplomatist. Sent to the United States in 1841 on a special commission on the subject of a long disputed boundary between Maine and the British Colonies. Daniel Webster praised him highly as a good man to deal with, who could see that there were two sides to a question.

behalf of our distinguished countryman John James Audubon Esq., who is the author of the great work *The Birds of America*, and who is about to illustrate American Science by another, *The Quadrupeds of North America*. Mr. Audubon will probably be accompanied by his younger son,¹ and one or two other assistants.

The object of this note is to ask for the interesting party such courtesies and assistance as they may need in their labors, and which gentlemen of the Army themselves, scientific and liberal, cannot fail to render with pleasure.

With great respect

I remain

Gentlemen

Yrs. truly

WINFIELD SCOTT.²

By the General

R. Jones³

Adjt. Gen^l.

July 25th, 1842.

IV.

Mr. John James Audubon an eminent naturalist and an American citizen, being about to visit our frontiers, he is hereby recommended to the kindness of all who would promote the science of natural history by honoring and assisting one who has devoted himself to it with such ability and enthusiasm, and particularly to the hospitality and protection of all officers and Agents of the War Department, Civil or Military, who [are] specially desired to render to Mr. Audubon and his party any assistance, protection and comfort in their power, not inconsistent with their public duties.

JOHN C. SPENCER.⁴

War Department,

July 25th, 1824.

¹ John Woodhouse Audubon. He did not, however, accompany his father. The party was made up of Edward Harris, Isaac Sprague, John G. Bell, and Lewis Squires. The Expedition occupied the period between March 11, 1843, and Nov. 6, of the same year.

² General Winfield Scott, born June 13, 1786; died May 29, 1866. In 1841 he became Commander in Chief of the Army of the United States.

³ Roger Jones, born 1787, died July 15, 1852. He was appointed Adjutant General of the Army March 7, 1825.

⁴ John Canfield Spencer, born 1788, died May, 1855. Secretary of War from October 12, 1841, to March, 1843, when he became Secretary of the Treasury.

V.

United States of America,
Washington, 28th July 1842.

The bearer of this, John James Audubon, is a native citizen of the United States, who has informed me of his intention of travelling on the continent of America, chiefly to promote the cause of science by researches in natural history. He is known to me to be a naturalist of eminent acquisitions and estimation, a man of character and honor and worthy of all personal respect and regard. I recommend him to my countrymen abroad and to the authorities and inhabitants of other countries that he may receive the friendly offices, aid and countenance which are due to the interests of science and the rites of hospitality among civilized nations.

JOHN TYLER,¹

President of the U. States.

LIST OF THE BIRDS OF LOUISIANA. PART IV.²

BY GEO. E. BEYER, ANDREW ALLISON, AND H. H. KOPMAN.

64. ROSEATE SPOONBILL (*Ajaia ajaia*). The only locality in the State where this species is now positively known to occur is the region about Lake Arthur, in southwest Louisiana. Material collected in this locality in 1894 is now in the museum of Tulane University. Spoonbills are reported to be resident in the Lake Arthur region. Their nesting places are in the heavy river and lake swamps of Cameron and Calcasieu Parishes. Two specimens were shot on the Mississippi River about five miles below New Orleans in December, 1884.

65. WHITE IBIS (*Guara alba*). A common resident, especially in swampy sections of the southern part of the State. In the latter part of summer it is not an uncommon sight in the less settled portions of the State to see long files or irregular flocks of this species, containing about

¹ John Tyler, Tenth President of the United States, born March 29, 1790; died January 18, 1862.

² For Parts I and II, see Volume XXIII, pp. 1-15, 275-282; for Part III, see Volume XXIV, pp. 314-321.